Adoption of Village for Rural Insurance

567. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have fixed any criteria for a village to be adopted for comprehensive rural insurance by any of the Insurance Companies;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the estimate of revenue generated by way of rural insurance; and

(d) the details of the measures adopted for the promotion of competition among various insurance companies for the same in the rural sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE-PATIL): (a) and (b) Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd. has adopted two districts *viz.* Ambala and Jodhpur for intensive rural insurance development while New India launched new rural insurance products in November, 2000 on pilot basis, in Ahmednagar district to meet the requirements of major occupational segments of rural population there. Similarly, Life Insurance Corporation of India, as a part of its marketing strategy to increase the percentage of insurance business from rural areas has adopted a scheme of recognizing the villages as "Bima Grams' subject to certain conditions.

(c) The four public sector general insurance companies generated a premium of Rs. 439.29 Crores during the year 2000-01 from the rural business. The Life Insurance Corporation of India generated a first year premium of Rs. 1887.67 Crores from new business from rural areas.

(d) The insurance companies compete among themselves for all business including rural insurance business, on the basis of their service and price of their insurance products.

Currency and Finance Report

568. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken into consideration the RBI Report titled "Currency and Finance Report" released on 12th January, 2002 in which RBI has raised fears of a deflation; and

(b) if so, what is the Government's response to this complex problem of finance management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE-PATIL): (a) The reference to deflation in the RBI Report on Currency and Finance is with respect to price movements in Japan.

(b) Does not arise.

Restoration of Import Duty on Soda Ash

569. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of representations have been received from Gujarat for restoration of import duty on soda ash to its original level in the interest of people of Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps Government have taken or propose to take to restore the duty on soda ash to its original level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government has received representations on behalf of the domestic soda ash manufacturers for restoration or increase of duty on soda ash.

(c) The Government has decided to retain the duty at the rate of 20 per cent on soda ash taking into account factors such as the domestic demand-supply position, comparative prices of indigenous and imported soda ash and status and composition of the domestic manufacturing and user industries.

Annual Target for DRI

570. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government and RBI have set annual target for all the Public Sector Banks in respect of Differential Rates of Interest (DRI) for the Weaker Sections of Society;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that none of the banks has achieved their target for the last many years;